

### **III. OUTREACH AND ADMISSIONS**

The primary purpose of the outreach and admissions (OA) component of Job Corps is to ensure a steady flow of eligible young people who can benefit from the program. Operating the program at or near capacity is important so that the resources devoted to it are used to full advantage. Short stays are viewed as wasteful, because the participants derive little benefit if they leave home to attend but then do not complete the program. In this context, the twin challenges for the OA system are (1) ensuring that qualified candidates are ready to enroll when slots become available; and (2) ensuring that these candidates fully understand what is expected of them and what life on center will be like, so as to avoid disappointment and early program termination. Sometimes tension exists between these two objectives.

#### **A. OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION OF OA**

OA involves several related activities. Outreach makes young people aware of the opportunities Job Corps offers and gives interested persons the information on which to base a decision to enroll. Screening for eligibility entails determining whether applicants meet several criteria. The eligibility criteria include readily verifiable factors (such as age, income, and citizenship), factors requiring the exercise of judgment (need for removal from the home, capacity to benefit from the program), and factors that may require review by professionally qualified third parties (evidence of serious health or behavioral problems). After they are determined eligible, students are assigned to enroll at a specific center on a particular date. In this final phase of counseling, the OA system prepares candidates for enrollment, arranges transportation, and sees the student off.

Several types of organizations share responsibility for OA, including Job Corps regional offices, OA agencies, and Job Corps centers. Regional offices are responsible for contracting with agencies

to perform OA work and for determining eligibility and assigning students to centers, although most regional offices delegate some or all of these decisions to OA agencies and centers. OA agencies play a pivotal role in Job Corps, because they generally are the first program representatives youths and their families deal with. As part of their outreach activities, OA agencies communicate to potentially eligible youths, as well as to other people and organizations who can identify and refer eligible youths, about the availability of the Job Corps and its opportunities. OA agencies must conduct outreach by using activities that are appropriate for their needs (for example, flyers, billboards, center tours, off-center presentations, and broadcast outlets) and by developing liaisons and working relationships with community organizations (for example, schools, court officers, employment services, and welfare agencies).

OA contractors are responsible for determining whether a youth who has applied to Job Corps is eligible for the program. The information used to determine eligibility is collected directly from the applicant (over the telephone or face to face) by an OA counselor, who fills out an agency-developed preapplication form or the Job Corps ETA-652 application form.<sup>1</sup> The screener must also obtain from appropriate authorities any additional information needed to determine an applicant's eligibility. If a candidate has a serious health condition or evidence of a behavioral problem, the regional office provides for a review of the case to ensure that eligibility rules are applied fairly and consistently and that persons who could benefit are not denied admission.

The OA contractor is also responsible for notifying eligible applicants of their assignment to a center and for arranging for their departure. To determine that a youth is still interested in Job Corps, an OA counselor will often contact him or her periodically between the time eligibility is determined

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<sup>1</sup>Currently, application processing is automated, with information entered into a computer and transferred to Student Pay, Allotment, and Management Information System (SPAMIS) if the student enrolls. At the time of the study, a paper-based system was used.

and a center assignment is made. A youth assigned to a center is contacted by the OA counselor to determine whether he or she will accept the assignment and to arrange travel and departure dates. At the beginning of this assignment interview, the OA counselor also checks for changes in the youth's health and emotional or behavioral condition, including recent arrests. The counselor then briefs the youth about the center, describes the program's requirements and expectations, and makes a final check on eligibility.

The OA counselor will brief youths who decide to participate on travel arrangements; advise about baggage, clothing, and documentation; and warn about the consequences of bringing drugs, alcohol, or weapons to the center. The OA counselor will also inform youths that a physical examination, which will include an HIV test, will be required after arrival. If a youth is on probation or parole, the OA counselor must notify the probation or parole officer. Finally, the OA counselor makes all departure arrangements, including escorting or providing an escort for youths to the initial transportation site and providing all travel and meal tickets required for the trip to the center. In addition, some OA counselors maintain contact with youths after they have arrived on center and throughout their Job Corps experience. Center staff are also often involved in the center assignment decision, and staff at most centers make prearrival calls to students.

## **B. OA COUNSELORS AND THEIR WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

OA counselors bear the primary responsibility for making their communities aware of Job Corps, for providing information about the program to interested youths and their families, for determining the eligibility of applicants, and for counseling those eligible applicants who decide to enroll. This section describes the characteristics and experiences these key staff have had with Job Corps. It also presents data on selected aspects of their working arrangements and sources of

information about Job Corps that may shape their ability to recruit, screen, and counsel applicants effectively.

## **1. Characteristics and Experience of OA Counselors**

Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, OA agencies employ as counselors a disproportionate share of the gender group that is the most difficult to recruit to Job Corps, namely females. Female admissions counselors recruit two-thirds of eligible applicants overall, with noteworthy differences by contractor type (Table III.1). Of applicants recruited by State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs) or other state agency contractors, just over half are recruited by female counselors. Of those recruited by a center holding an OA contract, over three-fourths (79 percent) are recruited by female counselors. However, while females recruit two-thirds of all applicants, females make up just over 40 percent of all students. Job Corps' goal has long been that half its students be female, but despite progress in recent years and concerted efforts to attract young women, the goal has not been fully realized. Young women are considerably more reluctant to live away from home, and their families less inclined to allow them to, than is the case with young men. Furthermore, a higher proportion of young women have child care responsibilities. The fact that a disproportionate share of OA counselors are female may reflect a belief that, in general, women can communicate more effectively to female applicants than male counselors can.

The ethnic composition of admissions counselors reflects the diversity of the students attracted to Job Corps. Black counselors recruit about one-half (47 percent) of all applicants nationwide, white counselors recruit 36 percent, and Hispanic counselors recruit 14 percent. This mirrors the ethnic composition of students, of whom 50 percent are black, 28 percent are white, and 15 percent are Hispanic. The different types of contracts have broadly similar ethnic diversity among

TABLE III.1

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB EXPERIENCE OF OA COUNSELORS  
(Percentage of Students Recruited by Each Agency Type by a  
Counselor with the Indicated Attribute)

	Contractor Type			
	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
Female	66	52	79	68
White	36	36	29	40
Black	47	47	54	41
Hispanic	14	14	16	12
Employed in Current Position as OA Counselor for (in Years)				
Less than 1	36	17	38	48
1 to 2	24	14	35	24
3 to 5	17	20	21	12
More than 5	23	49	7	16
Worked for Job Corps in Other Capacity	27	11	45	26

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

counselors. However, students recruited by Job Corps centers are slightly more likely than students recruited by a SESA or private agency to be recruited by a black or Hispanic counselor.

The ability of an OA counselor to describe the Job Corps program and what life is like on centers and to make good decisions on eligibility may depend on tenure in the job and experience in Job Corps, among other things. The bottom part of Table III.1 shows the percentage of applicants recruited by OA counselors with differing job tenures and the percentage recruited by counselors who had held other jobs with the program.

Overall, most OA counselors had limited experience in their position at the time of our survey, and few had held another position in Job Corps before becoming an OA counselor. About 60 percent of applicants are recruited by someone with two or fewer years of experience as an OA counselor for Job Corps. Less than one-fourth are recruited by an OA counselor with five or more years of experience. Just over one-fourth of OA counselors had held a prior position with Job Corps.

Differences across types of contractors in the job tenure of OA counselors they employ reflect the nature of the agencies and the recent turnover in OA contracts. Counselors employed by SESAs or other state agencies have much longer job tenures, with almost one-half of applicants recruited by a counselor who has worked for the state agency for more than five years. In contrast, over 70 percent of applicants recruited by counselors employed by Job Corps centers or other private contractors are counseled by someone who has worked as an OA counselor for two years or less. In part, this reflects a recent shift from using SESAs to engaging in a competitive procurement process. As OA contracts have passed from SESAs or other state agencies to private entities, such as Job Corps centers and other private contractors, new counselors were hired.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Nearly all the OA contracts in Regions 1 and 10 have been awarded to new contractors in the past several years. Consequently few OA counselors in these two regions have worked as OA counselors for more than three years. See Appendix Table B.4.

While overall about one-fourth of applicants are recruited by a counselor with Job Corps experience, the proportion is much higher among centers holding an OA contract (45 percent). Among counselors with Job Corps experience, most had worked at a center in some capacity, with “residential adviser” being their most common job (data not shown). In contrast, the counselors who were employed by other private contractors and who had previously worked elsewhere in the Job Corps system had been employed mostly as placement specialists, which reflects the common linkage of OA and placement functions in Job Corps.

The limited experience revealed by these data underscore the importance of ensuring that OA counselors are well informed both about the overall Job Corps program and about specific centers. The OA system cannot rely on the information accumulated through OA counselors’ experiences with the program to convey accurate information about center life. Counselors’ collective experience appears to be too limited to allow them to describe the program well without extensive support. Next, after describing selected characteristics of OA counselors’ working arrangements, we present data on OA counselors’ sources of information about specific centers.

## **2. Attributes of OA Counselors’ Jobs**

Several attributes of an OA counselor’s job may affect the services counselors provide to potential recruits. This section presents information on several of these attributes: whether the counselor works full- or part-time, the method of compensation, the categories of students the counselor recruits, and the allocation of work time to outreach, admissions-related, and other activities.

Full-time OA counselors recruit nearly all Job Corps students (96 percent). Students recruited by SESAs are somewhat more likely to be recruited by a counselor who works part-time (about 10 percent). This pattern probably reflects the fact that SESAs recruit proportionately more students

than other OA agencies in sparsely populated rural areas, where the OA counselor sees few students per year and performs other duties unrelated to Job Corps.

Nearly all OA counselors (85 percent) receive a salary; most of the rest (14 percent) are paid on an hourly basis (Table III.2). Hourly wages are more prevalent among OA counselors working for private agencies (about 20 percent) than among counselors at SESAs or Job Corps centers.

Each OA agency's contract specifies the number of male and female students it is to recruit and, within each gender group, the number of residential and nonresidential students. Individual counselors were asked about which groups they were responsible for recruiting. Just less than half (46 percent) of students are recruited by a counselor who recruits both male and female residential students (but not nonresidential students). A similar percentage (42 percent) is recruited by someone who recruits all gender and residential groups. It is interesting that such a high percentage of students is recruited by a counselor who recruits all types of students (including nonresidential students), because it implies that a large percentage of students is recruited from areas near centers with a nonresidential option. A relatively small percentage is recruited by a counselor who recruits only special groups of students (usually females or nonresidential students).

Finally, we present data on how OA counselors reported allocating their time among outreach activities, admissions-related activities, and other duties. These data show that just less than two-thirds of counselors' work time is spent on admissions-related activities, just over one-fourth is spent on outreach, and 10 percent is spent on other activities. The allocation of time to these various aspects of the job is similar across the different types of OA agencies.

### **C. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF OA COUNSELORS**

Counselors spend just over one-fourth of their time doing outreach through direct contacts with prospective students and through contacts with agencies that might refer students. As shown in



TABLE III.2

**ATTRIBUTES OF OA COUNSELORS' JOBS**  
 (Percentage of Students Recruited by Each Agency Type by  
 a Counselor with the Indicated Job Attribute)

	Contractor Type			
	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
Method of Basic Compensation				
Salary	85 <sup>a</sup>	85	94	77 <sup>a</sup>
Hourly wage	14	15	6	20
Categories of Students Recruited				
All categories	42	32	57	39
Male and female residential students only	46	63	25	50
Special groups only (only females, only nonresidential students)	11	5	19	11
Allocation of Time				
Percentage of time on				
Outreach	28	27	28	28
Admissions activities	62	63	63	61
Other activities	10	10	10	10

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

<sup>a</sup>One percent overall and 2 percent of private counselors reported being compensated by some other method.

Table III.3, just over 60 percent of students were recruited by someone who made a home visit. Of those counselors who visit, each made an average of 72 visits in the past 12 months. SESA counselors were more likely to make visits, but Job Corps center screeners who make visits make more per counselor. Center tours are a common, but by no means universal, method of making interested persons aware of what Job Corps has to offer. Contacts with potential sources of referrals are reported in the bottom section of Table III.3. Schools are a nearly universal referral source. Most counselors also contact courts and law enforcement agencies. Nearly all who have any contact said they had phone contact or sent materials. Not everyone with a contact, however, made in-person presentations.

To get an idea of how effective OA counselors believe the various types of outreach activities to be, we asked for estimates of the proportion of their applicants who heard about Job Corps from various sources. OA counselors estimated that “walk-ins” (persons who heard about the program from someone they know or through the media) are the most important source of recruits, accounting for just less than half of all applicants (45 percent) (Table III.4). The counselors estimated that referrals from agencies such as schools, the legal system, and the welfare office accounted for just over one-third of applicants. Finally, they thought that direct contacts with individual youths at outreach events such as job fairs accounted for just under one-fifth of applicants.

Sample members’ reports about how they first heard about Job Corps generally confirm the OA counselors’ relative rankings. Word of mouth accounts for over two-thirds, and media accounts for nearly 20 percent. Only 14 percent of the study sample said they first heard about Job Corps at school, the welfare office, an employment service, or some other place. Of this 14 percent, just 3 percent said they first heard about the program from an OA counselor. Of course, inconsistencies

TABLE III.3

**OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF OA COUNSELORS**  
 (Percentage of Students Recruited by Each Agency Type by  
 a Counselor with the Indicated Goal or Incentive)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
<b>Direct Contacts</b>				
Home Visits for Outreach Purposes				
Percentage conducting visits	62	68	63	56
Average number conducted in the past 12 months	72	67	111	45
Arranging or Conducting Center Tours				
Percentage who arrange or conduct center tours	72	59	87	72
Average number of center tours in the past 12 months	41	15	50	48
<b>Contacts with Groups That Might Refer Students</b>				
Schools				
Any contact in past 12 months	97	99	93	98
In-person presentation	92	91	91	93
Community-Based Organizations				
Any contact in past 12 months	93	90	94	95
In-person presentation	88	84	90	89
Courts or Law Enforcement Agencies				
Any contact in past 12 months	93	95	88	94
In-person presentation	65	59	69	67
Welfare Agencies				
Any contact in past 12 months	92	94	91	91
In-person presentation	67	67	78	60
Other Social Service Agencies				
Any contact in past 12 months	89	82	87	95
In-person presentation	78	71	79	83

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

TABLE III.4

OA COUNSELORS' PERCEPTIONS AND STUDENTS' REPORTS ABOUT  
HOW APPLICANTS HEAR ABOUT JOB CORPS  
(Percentage of Applicants Recruited by OA Counselor with the Indicated Attribute)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
OA Counselors' Estimates of How Applicants Heard About Job Corps				
Through one of the referral sources	36	35	32	39
From family or friends or through an advertisement (walk-in)	45	49	49	39
Through an outreach function like a job fair workshop or school	19	17	19	22

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA counselor survey.

Percentage of Students	
How Students Reported First Hearing About Job Corps	
Parents, relative, or friends	68
Media or mail	18
School or school counselor	5
Welfare office	3
Employment service	2
Other	4
OA counselor	3

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Baseline Interview.

NOTE: Figures sum to more than 100 because some respondents reporting "OA counselor" also reported school, welfare office, employment service, or other.

between the OA data and the student data are to be expected; for example, an OA counselor might first meet someone at a school event who first heard about Job Corps from a friend.

The student data in particular underscore the importance of word of mouth as a source of interest in the program. Also noteworthy, however, is the very large number of students who said they first heard of Job Corps through the media. During the period of the baseline survey and recruitment of the study sample, Job Corps made a concerted effort to build up on-board strength, and the National Office invested substantial funds in media advertising, which our data suggest had an effect.

Do the outreach efforts of OA counselors, who spend over one-fourth of their time doing outreach, represent a good investment of their time and other resources, in terms of generating new students? By OA counselors' estimates, these outreach efforts directly or indirectly generate slightly more than half of all applicants. On the other hand, students' reports suggest that such outreach efforts might generate as few as 14 percent of applicants, though the actual figure is very likely higher. Our data will not support a more refined estimate of the yield of outreach efforts. Yet it is important to keep in mind that, given the incentives in the system to meet arrival goals, outreach is most likely a residual activity. OA counselors are unlikely to sacrifice the opportunity to enroll a qualified candidate in favor of conducting outreach activities. Rather, they conduct outreach activities as they have time, and as they need to in order to generate an adequate flow of qualified applicants.

Some evidence for this view of how the process operates is found in the patterns of outreach activity by region reported in Appendix Tables B.5 and B.6. OA counselors in Region 9 (California and Arizona) reported spending less time on outreach and doing outreach activities to fewer referral sources than counselors in other regions. Yet center capacity utilization and waiting times for

enrollment were higher in Region 9 than in other regions. Thus, OA counselors there did less outreach, most likely because they needed to do less to keep the region's centers at full capacity.

#### **D. ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION**

Taking applications and determining the eligibility of youth who apply for Job Corps are key OA functions. Counselors assess the eligibility of each applicant, making sure that 11 criteria established in law and outlined in the Job Corps Policy and Requirements Handbook (PRH) are met (see Table III.5). However, they must provide full verification and documentation only for a 5 percent sample (based on the last two digits of the youth's social security number). For these sample cases, full verification is to be provided for criteria 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 11; applicants can self-certify for the others.

Most eligibility criteria are straightforward to interpret. The decision on whether or not they are satisfied is based on objective evidence that can easily be verified. The criteria pertaining to age, selective service registration, residency, economic disadvantage, need for additional education/training, child care, and parental consent are in this category. If health problems are noted, assessment of health history requires review by a medical consultant that each regional office retains. The remaining criteria--environment, capabilities and aspirations, and behavioral adjustment--require that OA counselors exercise considerable judgment.

Discussions with OA managers indicate that OA counselors rely heavily on the criteria specified in the PRH for assessing whether the characteristics of an applicant's environment impair his or her ability to participate successfully in education or training. The PRH directs OA counselors to rely on their knowledge of the applicant's home situation and community to form a judgment as to whether one of the disorienting conditions--disruptive home life, limited job opportunities, or disruptive community factors--is present. Accordingly, OA counselors exercise a great deal of

TABLE III.5

JOB CORPS ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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1. **Age.** Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and not more than 24 years of age at the time they enroll in Job Corps.
  2. **Selective Service Registration.** Male applicants 18 years of age or older must register with the Selective Service Board.
  3. **Residency.** Applicants must be legal U.S. residents and permitted to accept permanent employment in the United States.
  4. **Economically Disadvantaged.** Applicants, either as an individual or as a member of a family, must receive welfare payments or food stamps, or have income in relation to family size that does not exceed either OMB poverty guidelines or 70 percent of the lower living standards income level.
  5. **Need for Additional Education/Training.** Applicants must either have left high school without a diploma or require additional education, vocational training, or related support services in order to hold meaningful employment, participate successfully in regular school, qualify for other suitable training programs, or satisfy Armed Forces enlistment requirements.
  6. **Environment.** Applicants must be currently living in an environment characterized by
    - Disruptive home life, unsafe or overcrowded dwelling
    - Limited job opportunities
    - Disruptive communities with high crime rates

These are disorienting factors that impair the applicant's prospects for successful participation in other training, education, or other assistance programs.
  7. **Health History.** Applicants must be free of any health condition (medical, dental, or mental/emotional) that represents a hazard to themselves or others at a center, precludes participation in Job Corps with an expectation of successful completion, or requires intensive and costly treatment.
  8. **Behavioral Adjustment History.** Applicants must be free of behavioral problems that would prevent them from adjusting to the Job Corps standards of conduct, or would prevent others from benefiting from the program, or requires periodic face-to-face supervision from the court system or court-imposed financial obligations.
  9. **Child Care.** Applicants with dependent children must have established suitable arrangements for the care of these children for the proposed period of enrollment.
  10. **Parental Consent.** Applicants under the age of majority must obtain consent of a parent or guardian to enroll.
  11. **Capability and Aspirations to Participate.** Applicants must have the capabilities and aspirations needed to complete the program successfully and secure the maximum benefits of Job Corps.
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discretion in determining whether an applicant meets the environment criterion. OA managers indicated that counselors seldom find an applicant ineligible on the environment criterion, if she or he is otherwise eligible according to all other criteria and can benefit from Job Corps.

Under the capabilities and aspirations criterion, OA counselors must make a judgment based on information gathered and observations made during the application process as to whether applicants have the personal commitment and ability to take advantage of Job Corps. Our interviews with OA counselors inquired about how they use several different factors in assessing whether a candidate is suitable for Job Corps (Table III.6). Nearly all OA counselors (95 percent) use the youth's educational objectives, and most of these (88 percent) view having attainment of a GED as a goal as evidence the youth is suitable for Job Corps. Most (86 percent) use vocational goals in this assessment also. In terms of specific uses, just over two-thirds said vocational objectives consistent with Job Corps trade offerings were evidence that a candidate was suitable for Job Corps. Just over one-fourth said unrealistic vocational goals--those requiring high levels of advanced training or paying very high wages--caused them to question whether the candidate was suitable for Job Corps. Finally, most OA counselors use observations of behavior (91 percent) and attitudes (77 percent) during the application process. Interestingly, one-fourth said they used school or work experience in assessing a candidate's suitability for Job Corps. These data strongly suggest that OA counselors consider several factors in forming a judgment about whether an applicant has the capability and aspirations to benefit from Job Corps.

For the most part, as with the environment criterion, OA counselors form their assessment of the youth's suitability for Job Corps, but OA managers said they rarely determine someone to be ineligible for Job Corps solely on the grounds that the person lacks the capability and aspirations to succeed. Rather, an OA counselor who has reason to question an applicant's commitment is more



TABLE III.6

FACTORS USED IN ASSESSING APPLICANTS' SUITABILITY FOR JOB CORPS  
(Percentage of Job Corps Students Recruited by an OA Counselor  
Who Uses the Indicated Practice)

	Contractor Type			
	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
Uses Educational Objectives to Assess Suitability for Job Corps	95	93	95	96
Views Having GED Attainment as Goal as Evidence of Suitability for Job Corps	88	86	90	88
Uses Vocational Objectives to Assess Suitability for Job Corps	86	89	90	82
Views Vocational Objectives Matched with Job Corps Offerings as Evidence of Suitability for Job Corps	68	75	73	59
Views Unrealistic Vocational Goals as Evidence of Unsuitability for Job Corps	28	28	27	28
Uses Observations of Behavior During Application to Assess Suitability for Job Corps	91	92	87	93
Uses Observations of Attitudes to Assess Suitability for Job Corps	77	82	83	70
Uses Prior School or Work Experiences to Assess Suitability for Job Corps	28	37	18	30

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

likely to counsel the youth to think carefully about entering Job Corps. Some OA counselors reported that it is very difficult to predict which students will follow through and succeed in Job Corps and which students either will not enroll or will leave early. Many spoke about being surprised by students' outcomes: some who looked sure to succeed did not make it; others who looked questionable got to Job Corps and did well.

Shortly after our OA counselor survey was completed, Job Corps introduced a Capability and Aspirations Assessment Tool (CAAT) that counselors are now required to complete for every applicant to assist in their determination of suitability for the program. Because CAAT was developed by Job Corps after extensive consultation with OA managers and counselors, the form essentially formalizes the practices that counselors were following with applicants.

The behavioral adjustment criterion is a final area in which OA counselors and program staff often must negotiate a fine line. On the one hand, Job Corps seeks to offer youths who may have been in trouble with the law the opportunity to turn their lives around by getting a GED and learning a trade. Thus, the program does not want to exclude youths who have records of involvement with the law. On the other hand, a youth enrolling in Job Corps must not be currently under the control of the criminal justice system or juvenile justice system. Furthermore, the program is not equipped to handle youths who pose a threat of violence to themselves or others. Thus, youths with prior involvement with the criminal justice system are carefully screened first by the OA agency and then, if the OA agency uncovers a behavior problem, by the regional office or its designee. This process is intended to ensure that care and fairness are exercised in determining youths to be eligible or ineligible for Job Corps on the basis of the behavior adjustment criterion. The process aims to take calculated risks by offering youths with troubled histories the opportunity to get the training and education they need to become productive adults.

The behavioral adjustment eligibility criteria have recently taken on increased importance because of the policy changes introduced by Job Corps in the first part of 1995. The introduction of the expanded zero tolerance policy for violence and for drug and alcohol use, as well as the 30-day probationary period, emphasized the importance of screening applicants for a history of behavioral problems that include drug use and criminal behavior.

We asked OA counselors about how they assess an applicant's history of drug use and involvement with the criminal justice system (Table III.7). Nearly all counselors (accounting for 93 percent of applicants) are attempting to make an independent determination about whether each applicant is drug free regardless of what the applicant reports on the application form. Counselors are relying upon an applicant's self-report of drug use and their own observations of his or her behaviors and responses to questions during the admissions process to make this determination. Sixty-four percent of applicants are recruited by counselors who use applicant self-reported information, and 60 percent are recruited by counselors who use their own observations during the application process. A very small minority of counselors (just three percent) said they are requiring applicants to take a drug test. Practices are similar across contractor types.

While policy requires that counselors obtain records for applicants who report involvement with the criminal justice system, OA agencies have placed a heightened emphasis on determining the extent to which applicants who do not self-report criminal histories are, or have been, involved. Generally, applicants' records are obtained from any jurisdiction the applicant either resides in currently or resided in within the previous two years. Our data indicate that nearly all counselors (accounting for 96 percent of applicants) require the criminal justice records of all applicants (bottom part of Table III.7). Usually, the counselor personally requests the records from the relevant criminal justice agencies, and 55 percent of all eligible applicants are recruited by counselors who do so. In addition, a substantial minority both request the records themselves and ask the applicant to obtain

TABLE III.7

**OA COUNSELORS' APPROACHES TO ASSESSING DRUG USE AND DETERMINING  
PRIOR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**  
(Percentage of Applicants Screened by an OA Counselor Who Uses the Indicated Practice)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
<b>Assessing Drug Use</b>				
Determining for All Applicants Whether Drug Free	93	93	90	96
Using Applicant Self-Report	64	66	57	68
Using Own Observations of the Applicant During the Application Process	60	57	62	61
Requiring a Drug Test	3	5	2	3
<b>Determining Involvement with the Criminal Justice System</b>				
Criminal Justice Records Required for All Applicants	96	98	91	97
Counselor Requests Records	55	60	53	54
Counselor Requires Applicant to Obtain Records	10	9	14	7
Counselor Both Requests Records and Requires Applicant to Obtain Records	35	31	33	39

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

any criminal records (35 percent of all eligible applicants are recruited by counselors who use this practice). Finally, a small minority of counselors (who recruit only 10 percent of eligible applicants) rely solely on the applicant for any necessary criminal records. Again, different types of contractors follow similar practices.

## **E. CENTER ASSIGNMENT**

A youth who has been determined to be eligible for Job Corps is assigned to a center and given a date to travel there. Next, we describe the various factors that are considered and the processes followed in making the center assignment.

### **1. Factors Considered in Making Center Assignments**

OA agencies recruit youths primarily for Job Corps centers located within a region. Overall, approximately 98 percent of all eligible applicants during the period of sample intake for the study attended a center within the region in which they resided at application. Exceptions are allowed when centers in an applicant's home region have long waiting periods but those in a nearby region are operating below capacity.<sup>3</sup> In assignment of youths to centers within a region, distance is a major factor. Over half of sample members in the National Job Corps Study program group who enrolled at a center in their region enrolled in the center that was closest or second closest to their home (Appendix Table B.10). We infer that keeping transportation costs low and ensuring that youths can return home easily from their assigned center at holidays and other leave times are important objectives in making center assignments.

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<sup>3</sup>During the study intake period, the main sending regions were 2, 5, and 9 (accounting for 70 percent of students sent to other regions), and the main receiving regions were 4 and 7 (accounting for about 70 percent of students received from other regions). The largest bilateral flows were from Region 2 to 4 (20 percent of all exports), from Region 5 to 4 (15 percent), and from Region 9 to 7 (21 percent).

The interests and desires of students also weigh in the process. Many students want to attend a specific center. The baseline interviews revealed that about half of eligible applicants said they knew when they applied which center they wanted to attend. The reasons given for preferring a specific center offer insights into the factors that influence students' views about their upcoming Job Corps experience and the constraints the assignment process must deal with. Of the half who had a preference, 30 percent gave location or physical setting of the center as the reason for wanting to attend--23 percent wanted to attend a specific center because it was close to home, 4 percent because it was far from home, and 3 percent because its setting was attractive. Approximately 10 percent noted as their reason for selecting a specific center some other attribute--5 percent said it offered the trade they wanted, 3 percent said it had a good reputation, and 2 percent said it was the right size or had the right mix of students. Finally, just under 10 percent either knew someone at the center (7 percent) or were following the screener's advice (2 percent).

Even if applicants have not formed a preference for a specific center, they may have a preference for a specific trade. Since each center offers only a subset of all the trades, a student's expressed vocational preference also can be a factor in the center assignment decision. Approximately 85 percent of eligible applicants reported on the baseline interview that they had a vocational training preference, although just 5 percent said their vocational preference was the reason they preferred a specific center.

Also entering the calculation is the period that a student must wait before enrollment at a Job Corps center. Job Corps has a fixed number of slots, and when centers are operating at full capacity, new enrollees may need to wait for a slot to open up as experienced students complete the program. If a center is operating below its assigned capacity, the waiting period for enrollment will be brief. The waiting period can vary from just a few days in some regions to several months in others; it can

also vary at certain times of the year. Waiting times for female residential students are generally much shorter than waiting times for male residential students.

If some centers in the region are operating below capacity, OA counselors are reluctant to have the youths they recruit placed on waiting lists, because they perceive a higher risk that an applicant forced to wait a long time will not enroll. In this circumstance, a good candidate in whom the OA counselor may have invested considerable personal effort may not want to wait and may decide not to enroll. Thus, to a degree that varies greatly from case to case, pressures exist in the system to assign applicants to centers that are underenrolled.

In summary, the process for assigning students to Job Corps centers weighs several, often competing, objectives:

- Keep travel distance and cost to a reasonable level
- Keep the centers in the region operating at full capacity
- Avoid making students wait any longer than necessary for assignment
- Accommodate students' expressed preferences for a specific center
- Accommodate students' preferences for centers with specific attributes (such as trades offered, location, mix of students)

The extent to which these various factors weigh in any specific student's center assignment varies greatly. Our data indicate that the role of location and travel distance is very different from region to region. Much depends on the location of the Job Corps center relative to the areas from which students are drawn. Median distance is shortest in Region 9, where 25 percent of students are nonresidential and centers tend to be located in or near urban areas. Students in Region 9 tend to be assigned to centers close to home; indeed, half are from the same county in which their center is located. At the opposite extreme, the highest median travel distance is in Region 4, which

encompasses the area from Kentucky to Florida. Over half of students travel at least 230 miles to attend Job Corps. As in Region 9, the travel distances appear to be due at least in part to the location of centers relative to students' homes. Region 4 students are drawn from the Piedmont and coastal areas of the Southeast, whereas several centers (including a very large one) are located in Kentucky and the Appalachian area of North Carolina. Appendix Table B.10 provides data by region on distances from the home areas of Job Corps students to the Job Corps centers they attend.

## **2. Processes for Assigning Students to Job Corps Centers**

The center assignment process varied across regions at the time of the study. In some regions, the regional office played a clearinghouse role, keeping track of the number of new slots expected to be open in each center and assigning a specific number of center slots to each OA contractor. In other regions, the regional office had delegated this responsibility to the OA contractors, who communicated directly with centers to find out where slots were open and decide how the available new students would be allocated.

OA counselors reported playing a limited role in assigning students to centers. Only 20 percent of all eligible applicants are recruited by an OA counselor who can assign applicants to specific centers. Although most OA counselors do not assign applicants to centers, they appear to have a good understanding of how the various factors are weighed in the center assignment decision. Indeed, they were able to predict correctly which center a given youth would attend for nearly 90 percent of the program group members who ultimately attended a center.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>As part of data collection for the study, we asked OA counselors to indicate which center they believed each youth would be assigned to. This information was provided before random assignment so that the information would be available for all sample members, including both control group members and persons who were assigned to the program group but did not enroll.



Given the fluidity and flexibility of the assignment process, an important role of the OA counselor is to manage students' preferences and expectations about center assignment, as described in the next section.

## **F. ADMISSIONS COUNSELING**

### **1. Candidates Admitted to Job Corps**

After an applicant has been found eligible and assigned to a center, the OA counselor helps in several ways to prepare the youth for enrollment at a Job Corps center. First, the counselor provides information about Job Corps in general, and possibly about specific centers, and responds to questions. The counselor may provide detailed information about specific centers at various points in the process from outreach to enrollment, but regardless of when the information is provided, it ultimately helps prepare the youth to enroll by conveying an accurate sense of what Job Corps is like and of what to expect. Since applicants may be assigned to a center other than the one they requested or to one that does not offer a trade in which they have expressed a preference, an element of this information exchange about centers is managing the expectations of applicants so as to avoid disappointing them. Second, when the youth has been assigned to a center, the OA counselor arranges transportation and notifies the youth of the departure date. Third, OA counselors review the applicant's eligibility status at the time of departure to ensure the youth remains eligible at the time of enrollment. Finally, some OA counselors contact youths after they arrive at a center to learn about their initial adjustment to the program and to provide any needed support. This section describes these counselor activities that prepare applicants for enrollment in Job Corps.

Most applicants see a visual representation of the center they will attend, and nearly all receive written materials on center policies. Just less than half of eligible applicants (44 percent) are recruited by counselors who usually show applicants videotapes of centers (Table III.8). Similarly,

TABLE III.8

MATERIALS USED TO INFORM APPLICANTS ABOUT CENTERS AND APPROACHES  
TO MANAGING EXPECTATIONS RELATED TO CENTER ASSIGNMENT  
(Percentage of Applicants Screened by an OA Counselor Who Uses the Indicated Practice)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
Show Videotapes of Centers				
Usually	44	37	40	51
Sometimes	23	34	14	21
Show Pictures of Centers				
Usually	46	47	36	51
Sometimes	25	21	28	26
Provide Written Material About Centers				
Usually	92	95	92	89
Sometimes	5	4	3	8
Counselor Response to Center Preference				
Tell applicant to be open-minded	57	61	48	60
Attempt to satisfy preference	39	38	41	39
Counselor Response to Vocational Preference				
Tell applicant to be open-minded	58	60	57	58
Attempt to satisfy preference	40	40	37	41

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

46 percent are recruited by counselors who usually show them pictures of centers. About one-third of applicants are recruited by a counselor who seldom or never uses videos, and 30 percent are recruited by a counselor who seldom or never uses pictures. Counselors who usually provide written materials about the centers recruit 92 percent of all applicants. Counselors who work for private OA contractors that are not directly affiliated with a Job Corps center are somewhat more likely to use videos and pictures and less likely to use written descriptions of centers during the recruitment process.

The written materials provided to applicants include documents explaining the academic and vocational programs at centers, the residential living program, the pay and bonus system, and statements about the zero tolerance, one-strike-and-you're-out, and 30-day probationary period policies. OA counselors recruiting nearly all applicants (98 percent) said they provided written material explaining Job Corps' policies on zero tolerance for violence and drug use. In addition, an OA counselor provides over 85 percent of applicants with written explanations of the one-strike and 30-day probationary period policies.

Another important aspect of preparing applicants for enrollment is to deal with their preferences for a particular vocational trade or their preferences to attend a particular center. As indicated earlier, counselors have little control over the assignment of applicants to specific centers. Only about 20 percent of applicants are recruited by counselors who can also assign them to specific centers. Because assignment to particular centers affects applicants' vocational training options and their distance from home, counselors must prepare them for the possibility of assignment to any number of centers and must manage their expectations regarding the vocational offerings available.

Most applicants (nearly 60 percent) are recruited by OA counselors who tell them to be "open-minded" when they express a preference for a specific center or a specific trade. The rest are

recruited by a counselor who attempts to satisfy both the vocational preference and the center preference.

While most counselors follow these patterns, we noted some interesting regional variations. OA counselors in Region 1 are very likely to tell applicants to be open-minded about their vocation (100 percent) and about their center (67 percent). Those in Region 9 tend to tell applicants to be open-minded about their vocation (72 percent), but most also attempt to satisfy center preference (67 percent). Finally, Region 10 counselors attempt to satisfy preferences on vocation (66 percent), while telling applicants to be open-minded about their center (58 percent) (Appendix Table B.11).

The final steps in the assignment process involve activities that OA counselors conduct with applicants before, at the time of, and after center assignment. The extent to which OA counselors maintain a strong connection to the youth during this period may directly affect the likelihood that the youth decides to enroll in Job Corps. Over three-fourths (78 percent) of all eligible applicants are recruited by an OA counselor who initiates contact with eligible applicants between eligibility determination and center assignment (Table III.9). Eligible applicants who are recruited by counselors employed by private agencies not affiliated with a center are somewhat less likely than counselors at other types of agencies to initiate contact with a youth awaiting center assignment (73 percent compared to 81 or 82 percent).

At the point when an OA counselor informs the youth of the center assignment, the counselor has the opportunity to collect additional information regarding eligibility, formally inspect the eligibility criteria to ensure the youth is not a fraudulent enrollment, review the youth's health history or drug use, examine any involvement with the criminal justice system, or gauge the youth's ability to benefit from the Job Corps program by assessing capabilities and aspirations. The relative emphasis the OA counselor places on these activities reflects the counselor's philosophy and goals,

TABLE III.9

OA COUNSELORS' CONTACTS WITH APPLICANTS BETWEEN  
CENTER ASSIGNMENT AND ARRIVAL AT CENTER  
(Percentage of Applicants Screened by OA Counselors  
Who Perform the Indicated Activity)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
Initiate Contact with Eligible Applicants Awaiting Center Assignment	78	82	81	73
Conduct Interview at Time of Center Assignment	93	96	87	94
Review Eligibility at Time of Center Assignment	61	68	58	57
Review Involvement with Criminal Justice System at Time of Center Assignment	57	65	56	51
Review Health History/Drug Use at Time of Center Assignment	57	64	53	54
Review Capability and Aspirations at Time of Center Assignment	55	62	50	55
Contact Prior to Departure	96	95	95	98
Escort Applicant to Point of Departure	72	77	69	70
Contact after Arrival at Center	57	39	68	61
Try to Contact No-Shows	97	98	94	98

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

in particular whether the object is to assess each youth's match with the program or to ensure that enrollment targets are met. Nearly all eligible applicants (93 percent) are recruited by a counselor who conducts a formal center assignment interview. Most also are recruited by a counselor who reviews eligibility (61 percent), involvement with the criminal justice system (57 percent), health history (57 percent), and capability and aspiration (55 percent) as part of the interview.

OA counselors have responsibilities after applicants have been assigned to a Job Corps center, including maintaining contact with the applicant prior to departure, escorting the applicant to the point of departure, continuing contact after the applicant arrives on center, and following up with students who do not enter Job Corps (no-shows). The extent to which an OA counselor maintains contact with the youth immediately before and after center arrival to answer questions or alleviate concerns is likely to affect directly the likelihood that the youth enters Job Corps, as well as the likelihood of early termination.

Ninety-six percent of all applicants are recruited by a counselor who usually maintains contact with them between center assignment and departure. This practice is widespread across contractor types and region. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of all eligible applicants are recruited by an OA counselor who usually escorts applicants to their point of departure.

Fifty-seven percent of all eligible applicants are recruited by an OA counselor who usually contacts applicants after they arrive on center. SESAs and other state agencies are least likely to maintain such contact. Nearly all eligible applicants (97 percent) are recruited by an OA counselor who usually attempts to contact no-shows.

## **2. Candidates Not Admitted to Job Corps**

Some applicants for Job Corps do not meet the program's eligibility criteria. Sometimes the education and training needs of an applicant can best be met through an alternative program in the

youth's community, so the OA counselor refers the applicant to other service providers. Nearly all OA counselors (those serving 98 percent of applicants) said they usually refer ineligible applicants to other service providers for assistance (Table III.10). Looking at the approaches used by OA counselors who said they refer ineligible applicants to other service providers, relatively few (accounting for 18 percent of applicants) said they give ineligible applicants only a listing of referrals and expect them to make their own contact. Most OA counselors (those accounting for 79 percent of applicants) said they try to match ineligible applicants with the most appropriate referral source. OA counselors from SESAs were less likely to say they refer most applicants to another program, less likely to say they tried to match the person with an appropriate agency, and more likely to say they provided only a list of training agencies than were OA counselors working for Job Corps centers or other private agencies. OA counselors reported that they routinely refer applicants to a broad range of agencies. Nearly all (accounting for over 90 percent of applicants) routinely refer to JTPA agencies or other training programs and schools. Also used by many OA counselors are community-based organizations (78 percent), SESAs (65 percent of those who were not employed by such organizations), and welfare agencies (58 percent). Approximately half said they referred people to religious organizations and private employment agencies, and just over one-third said they referred people to armed forces recruiters.

## **G. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

This section presents data on two factors that may affect OA counselors' ability to perform their key counseling functions well: (1) OA agencies' use of goals and incentives for monitoring counselors' performance, and (2) sources of counselors' information about specific Job Corps centers.

TABLE III.10

PRACTICES IN REFERRING INELIGIBLE JOB CORPS APPLICANTS  
AND AGENCIES TO WHICH THEY ARE REFERRED  
(Percentage of Applicants Screened by a Counselor Who Uses  
the Indicated Practice)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
Usually Refer Applicants Who Are Not Able to Enter Job Corps to Other Service Provider	98	95	100	98
Usually Refer Only by Providing a List of Service Providers	18	25	15	16
Usually Refer by Matching to a Specific Service Provider	79	69	85	82
Types of Agencies to Which Applicants Are Referred:				
JTPA agencies/other training programs	93			
Schools	91			
Community-based organizations	78			
SESAs	65			
Welfare agencies	58			
Churches or other religious organizations	54			
Private employment agencies	50			
Armed services recruiting agencies	38			

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.



## **1. Use of Goals**

Establishing clear, attainable goals is an important way to hold both individual OA counselors and OA agencies accountable for the work they do. Indeed, DOL's Office of Inspector General (OIG) identified the requirement that counselors fulfill goals as a hallmark of effective recruitment operations. In recognition of the importance of setting goals, Job Corps has instituted a performance system that holds OA agencies accountable for two key outcomes: (1) the number of students who arrive on center, and (2) the percentage of students who stay at least 30 days. The first goal is geared to ensuring that centers have the constant flow of new students necessary to operate at full or nearly full capacity. Operating at less than full capacity wastes program resources, because much per-student cost is fixed. The second goal, retention, seeks to ensure that OA agencies send to the program only students who are well suited for center life, have a clear understanding of what is expected, and have an accurate picture of what center life will be like. Students arriving on center with unrealistic expectations are far more likely to terminate early.

Data from the OA counselor interview indicate the extent to which OA agencies were implementing the practices that Job Corps was trying to promote in establishing its performance measurement system for contractors. Job Corps formally instituted its OA performance measurement system in program year 1996 (latter half of calendar year 1995). Thus, our survey of OA counselors conducted in early 1996 captures program practices at an early stage of implementation of the new standards.

Table III.11 shows the extent to which goals and financial incentives were used in early 1996. At that point, 82 percent of students were recruited by an OA counselor who had a specific goal for the number of students to be sent to Job Corps. Just over one-fourth also had a goal for the number of students staying at least 30 days. Thus, it appears that most OA agencies were focusing on

TABLE III.11

USE OF GOALS AND INCENTIVES IN OA  
(Percentage of Students Recruited by Each Agency Type by a Counselor  
with the Indicated Goal or Incentive)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
<b>Goals</b>				
Goals for Number of Arrivals	82	81	79	84
Goals for Number Staying at Least 30 Days	27	27	19	33
<b>Incentives</b>				
Offer Some Incentives	43	6	31	78
Offer Incentive for <sup>a</sup>				
Each arrival on center	19	<1	7	40
Each arrival on center over a target number	22	2	17	39
Each student staying at least 30 days	16	2	4	36
Each student over a target number who stays at least 30 days	9	2	4	17

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

<sup>a</sup>OA counselors who reported being eligible for any incentive generally reported being eligible for two or more different types.

meeting quotas of students to keep centers full. Fewer, however, were tracking whether OA counselors recruited students that stayed for at least 30 days.

The use of financial incentives for individual counselors indicates that managers take the goals seriously. As shown in the bottom part of the table, roughly half the counselors (43 percent) who have goals reported that they were offered some kind of financial incentive, compared to 82 percent who said they had a goal.

Differences in the practices of the different types of OA agencies are noteworthy. All types of OA agencies were about equally likely to have goals--about 80 percent. Furthermore, the percentage of private contractors who provide financial incentives is also nearly 80 percent. In contrast, few SESAs provided financial incentives (6 percent). Interestingly, the centers that conduct OA activities fall between the two. The percentage reporting financial incentives is just less than half the percentage that have goals (79 percent). These data suggest that managers of private OA agencies focus the energies of their staffs on achieving measurable goals to a far greater extent than SESAs do. Of course it is likely that SESA agency managers are working within civil service systems that make it difficult to offer incentive payments.

## **2. Sources of Information About Specific Job Corps Centers**

One of the key functions of an OA counselor is to provide applicants with a realistic picture both of the Job Corps program and of what life at a center is like. A knowledge of vocational offerings and the setting and facilities is especially important. Clearly, to provide a realistic picture of Job Corps to applicants, counselors must be well informed about the way the program operates at the centers they recruit potential students for and what life is like there. A counselor's knowledge of specific centers will depend on the number of centers to which he or she sends students, length of time on the job, and access to sources of information about specific centers, either from personal

visits or from videotapes, descriptive brochures, or newsletters. We begin by presenting data on the number of centers for which OA counselors typically recruit.

Most students are assigned to centers within their home region. Furthermore, distance from the home plays a role in the center assignment decision. While it is not a rule that a student must attend the center closest to home, students are assigned as close to their home as is practical in order to keep transportation costs reasonable and to facilitate visits. This leads to a situation in which the typical OA counselor recruits for approximately 60 percent of the centers in his or her region, or 6 to 7 centers (Table III.12). OA counselors employed by SESAs and by Job Corps centers tend to recruit for a somewhat smaller percentage of the centers in their region (50 and 52 percent, respectively), while OA counselors working for private agencies send students to a somewhat higher percentage of centers in their regions (70 percent).

Table III.12 also provides data on the sources of information that are available to OA counselors about the Job Corps centers that the students they recruit will attend. The data suggest that OA counselors lack extensive firsthand knowledge of the programs at these centers. Counselors who recruit typical eligible applicants reported having visited in the most recent 12-month period only 15 percent of the centers that their applicants might attend. In most regions, this amounts to one or two centers (three in regions that strongly emphasized to contractors and center operators contacts between OA counselors and centers). In conjunction with the short job tenure of OA counselors noted earlier, these data suggest that many counselors have never visited many of the centers they recruit for.

OA counselors also report having materials about only a relatively small share of the centers they recruit for. For example, they report having videotapes (29 percent) and brochures (38 percent) for only a few more centers than the number they have visited. Yet even here the fraction of centers

TABLE III.12

PERCENTAGE OF CENTERS IN REGION FOR WHICH COUNSELORS RECRUIT  
AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THEM

(Percentage of Students Recruited by Each Agency Type by a  
Counselor with the Indicated Information)

	Overall	SESAs and Other State/Local Government Agencies	Job Corps Center Operators	Other Private Contractors and Nonprofit Agencies
Average Percentage of Centers Attended by Applicants Recruited by OA Counselor	59	50	52	70
Percentage of Centers in Region That Their Recruits Attend That OA Counselor Has				
Visited in past 12 months	15	8	15	19
Received a videotape from	29	36	19	31
Received a descriptive brochure from	38	39	23	47
Received a newsletter from in the past 12 months	11	11	11	12
Received a trade waiting list from in past 12 months	11	7	10	15
Received other information from in the past 12 months	10	7	8	13

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study OA Counselor Survey.

for which the OA counselor has each resource is well below half. Finally, counselors reported receiving the types of communications that could convey the most up-to-date information about centers, such as newsletters or trade waiting lists, for only a few centers (11 percent for newsletters and 11 percent for trade waiting lists). The patterns are broadly similar for the different types of OA agencies.

## **H. CENTERS' LINKAGES WITH OA CONTRACTORS**

The Job Corps program requires each center to “establish and maintain positive partnerships” with OA contractors and their staffs to ensure that students who would enroll are informed about and committed to participating in the center’s training program. Centers can establish and maintain these relationships easily when they hold a contract to conduct OA activities themselves, or when OA counselors from another contractor are located close to the center. However, many centers serve students whose homes are distant, and these centers must work with OA counselors who are also far away.

Perhaps the best way for counselors to get a better understanding of a center’s unique features or special program offerings is to visit the center. Nearly all centers reported that most (40 percent) or some (57 percent) of the OA counselors that recruit for the center had visited during the past year (Table III.13). Only 4 percent said that none of their OA counselors had visited in the past year. These reports by centers are very different from the finding in the data provided by OA counselors (Table 12), which indicate that an eligible applicant is recruited by a counselor who has recently visited just 15 percent of the centers that his or her applicants might attend. Not surprisingly, Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs) located away from population centers are less likely to say that most (20 percent) OA counselors visit, and significantly nonresidential centers are more likely to say that most OA counselors had visited (76 percent).

TABLE III.13

CENTER DIRECTORS' REPORTS ON OA COUNSELORS' VISITS TO CENTERS  
AND TYPES OF INFORMATION PROVIDED TO OA COUNSELOR  
(Percentage of Centers)

	Overall	CCC	Centers Serving Primarily Residential Students	Centers Serving Significant Nonresidential Students
OA Counselors' Visits to Centers				
Most have visited	40	20	34	76
Some have visited	57	73	64	20
None have visited	4	7	2	4
Types of Information Provided:				
Video	70	77	67	69
Brochure	95	90	94	100
Vocational trade waiting lists	41	33	39	54
Other material (pictures)	61	27	76	69
No information provided	4	7	4	0

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Job Corps Center Mail Survey.

OA counselors can also be informed about the center through videotapes, brochures, other written material (such as newsletters), as well as information on vocational training programs that have waiting lists. Table III.13 summarizes the types of information that centers indicated they provide to OA contractors to describe such features of their center.

Nearly all centers (95 percent) reported providing brochures about their programs to OA contractors, and over two-thirds (70 percent) report providing videotapes. Again, these figures are in sharp contrast to the results of the OA survey, which indicated that a typical eligible applicant is recruited by an OA counselor who receives a brochure for only 38 percent of the centers for which she or he recruits and a video for only 20 percent.

A significant percentage of centers (41 percent) reported providing information to OA contractors about which vocational training programs have waiting lists. Again, this is in contrast to the information from the OA counselor survey, which indicates that the typical applicant is recruited by a counselor who receives trade waiting lists for only 10 percent of the centers he or she recruits for.

These reports from centers are clearly at odds with those provided by OA counselors, who have very different perceptions concerning the centers' specific information available to them. These differences in perception are even more interesting based on the other information we obtained in the visits to centers. In particular, the need to strengthen linkages between OA contractors and centers was a key theme to emerge from site visits. Students, counselors, orientation staff, and instructors all describe problems with OA counselors being out of touch with center life. Many emphasize the need for OA staff to visit the center more often in order to keep current on center programs, facilities, and services. In particular, both students and staff feel that OA counselors lack up-to-date information on center vocational offerings and sometimes give students inaccurate or



incomplete information about training opportunities. This picture is reasonably consistent with data from the OA counselor interview indicating that counselors receive very little information about centers but is inconsistent with center reports that they are providing extensive information to OA counselors. It is unclear what is causing this important discrepancy between the reports of counselors and of centers.

Additional information about center staff's perceptions of the overall level of knowledge that OA counselors have about the Job Corps program and about their specific center is provided in Table III.14. A majority of centers (58 percent) feel that OA counselors are "very well informed about Job Corps," but a minority (40 percent) feel that counselors are "very well informed about their specific center." About 39 percent of centers reported that OA counselors were "somewhat informed about Job Corps" and just over half said OA counselors were "somewhat informed about their center." Centers serving a significant nonresidential student population were substantially more likely to say that OA counselors were "very well informed" about the Job Corps program (88 percent) and about the specific center (72 percent). Closer proximity of OA counselors to the center is almost certainly a major reason for this.

TABLE III.14

CENTER DIRECTORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT OA COUNSELORS' KNOWLEDGE OF  
JOB CORPS AND OF THEIR CENTER'S PROGRAM  
(Percentage of Centers)

	Overall	CCC	Centers Serving Primarily Residential Students	Centers Serving Significant Nonresidential Students
How Well OA Staff Are Informed About Job Corps Program				
Very well	58	43	52	88
Somewhat	39	53	44	12
Not very well	3	3	4	0
How Well OA Staff Are Informed About the Program Specifically Offered by Center				
Very well	43	33	35	72
Somewhat	51	63	57	24
Not very well	6	3	7	4

SOURCE: National Job Corps Study Job Corps Center Mail Survey.